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Herbs Inspire Variety

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Iowa State College

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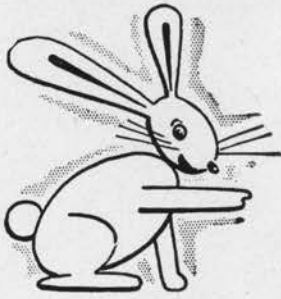
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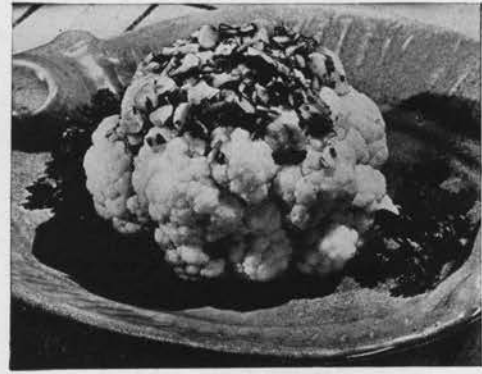
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By combining herbs with fresh vegetables in the wartime menu, the homemaker can produce welcomed variations in her daily meal plans

Herbs Inspire

Variety

Flavor and convenience bring exotic herbs back into menus of today, explains Margaret Ralston

THE problem of planning wartime meals that are varied and interesting has revived the popularity of herb flavors.

Herbs have usually been connected with witches' brews or closely guarded secrets of European courts, but in the last few years herb gardens and the use of herbs have been coming back into style. However, there has remained that touch of mystery, that air of exclusiveness about them. Homemakers have hesitated to use them because of their unfamiliarity, and, therefore, their potentialities have not been realized. Now when food purchases are limited, the homemaker can meet the challenge to keep meals interesting.

Herb gardens do not require much care and occupy very little space. One gardener has grown a variety of herbs bordered by the spokes and rim of a yellow-painted wheel.

An herb garden need not be large since herbs are used sparingly in cooking. The leaves of one thyme plant when dried and rubbed into a powder will make a 2-years' supply for the average family. If the seeds are to be used in seasoning, a few more plants will be needed, but the herb corner still will be small.

One of the most popular herbs is the chive, a dainty little plant with purple, clover-like flowers. The tops, delicately onion-flavored, are chopped finely and used in salads, omelets, meat mixtures and similar dishes. Chive butter improves hot rolls or rye bread, and the chopped green adds variety to cottage cheese or stuffed baked potatoes.

Sweet basil is a natural with tomatoes. Sweet marjoram is another of the more popular spices accenting

soups, salads, stews and meat balls. Fennel and savory add interest to stews, soups and meat dishes.

Parsley, an old favorite, adds variety to many dishes. Parsley, chives, sweet basil and sweet majoram can be transplanted to kitchen pots at the end of the season and used fresh all winter.

Melissa balm has a delicate lemon-like flavor that is pleasing in soups or stews, and tangy in summer drinks. Borage is another sweet herb which adds flavor to lemonade and fruit punch. The various varieties of mint, of course, are indispensable in summer entertainment.

Herbs can be used to great advantage in vegetables as well as in meat dishes. Chopped marjoram in butter over spinach is new and thyme is excellent with carrots. Peas with mint or savory and beets with dill and vinegar give a lift to dull meals.

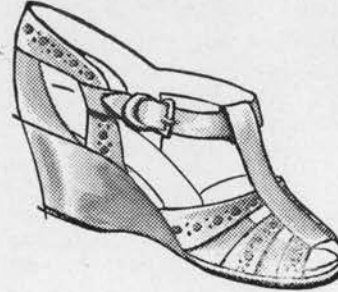
Sage, when used subtly, is an excellent flavoring for pork, goose, sausages, veal and cheese. Ranking together in popularity and usefulness are spearmint and peppermint. Spearmint is excellent for flavoring cold drinks and jellies, and peppermint gives candy a good flavor.

Dill, one of the most common of the herbs, has long been used for making pickles. If caraway is not wanted for its savory seeds, the flowering stems can be effectively used for striking flower arrangements.

The aromatic fragrance and flavor of herbs is due to a volatile oil which is released in the foods with which the herbs are combined. The effective use of herbs requires a lively imagination and willingness to experiment on the part of the homemaker. However, the resulting sparkle in otherwise ordinary meals will repay the homemaker who adventures with herbs.

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